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Chairman:	Mr. Butagira	(Uganda)
later:	Ms. Carvalho (Vice-Chairman)	(Portugal)
later:	Mr. Butagira (Chairman)	(Uganda)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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05-54560 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 64: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/60/38, A/60/62-E/2005/10, A/60/79, 111, 137 and Corr.1, 165, 206, 211, 274, 281, 371 and 372)

Agenda item 65: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/60/170, 111, 211 and 371)

1. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia) said that Indonesia's latest report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women covered a period of considerable change, from December 1995 to December 2003.

2. Indonesia's continued focus was poverty among women. Its national strategy in that regard pursued economic empowerment of women through income-generating activities made possible by micro-credit, upgrading of technology, development of skills and the availability of social safety nets. Tackling poverty must not be interpreted as a philanthropic activity, but rather as one which helped women to build capacities and self-esteem. To improve gender equality and justice at national, provincial and municipal levels, the Government had revised the law on decentralization, forcing local authorities to integrate gender issues into every stage of development.

3. Indonesia supported the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General on violence against women (A/60/137), which examined the issue of women migrant workers, and urged all States to adopt prevention measures, including awareness-raising initiatives to educate women migrants about their rights. States must provide support in the form of shelters, legal aid and medical, psychological, social and economic assistance. National legislation had been enacted to prevent domestic violence and trafficking in women and children.

4. Gender mainstreaming throughout national and United Nations core policies must continue in order to further women's rights. Indonesia welcomed the inclusion, in the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit, of reference to women's important role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and in peacebuilding.

5. **Ms. Otani** (Japan) said that the power of nature had made itself felt since the beginning of 2005 through the Indian Ocean tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, the earthquake in Southern Asia and Tropical Storm Stan in Central America. As part of the international response to those disasters, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had worked to improve the role of women in the reconstruction effort, supporting leadership by local women, mobilizing women's networks, helping to revive women's livelihoods and ensuring that women were protected. When contributing to the United Nations post-tsunami flash appeal and in subsequent disaster-reduction debates, Japan had emphasized the gender perspective.

6. The role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction had been increasingly recognized, and had been highlighted in the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit. Though women had been in the forefront of urging an end to conflict, they had been on the margins of official peace and reconstruction processes. With women playing a central role in maintaining and promoting peace and security, those processes must take account of their needs, especially in the case of female refugees and internally displaced persons.

7. Japan was working on mainstreaming gender considerations into its official development assistance. At national level, it would aim to have women in at least 30 per cent of leadership positions in all sectors of society by 2020. The Government also wished to ensure that men and boys played a role in ensuring equal employment opportunities and the ability to balance a career with family life. The path to gender equality was one which men and women must walk together.

8. **Ms. Laohaphan** (Thailand) said that women remained trapped in poverty and were still frequent victims of HIV/AIDS, armed conflict and domestic violence. While the feminization of poverty was a familiar issue, the feminine face of HIV/AIDS was emerging: more women and girls than men were being infected. One cause was limited access to education. Women also suffered from limited access to economic and natural resources and a low level of participation

and representation in political, social and economic life, leading to a failure to fulfil and profit from their potential. Recognizing that only 10 per cent of government positions were filled by women, the Thai cabinet had taken steps to encourage appointment of women to posts in national and local politics.

9. Thailand was in the process of enacting a law to prevent domestic violence, and had established family development centres to address that issue at community level. It planned to triple the number of such centres — currently 2,000 — by 2008. Also established were one-stop crisis centres at hospitals, telephone hotlines, a police centre to protect women, young people and children, and temporary shelters. Men were being involved in efforts to combat violence against women. Thailand looked forward to the report of the Secretary-General on violence against women (A/60/211), which would examine causes and remedies.

10. Thailand was also in the process of enacting a law to prevent and suppress human trafficking. It had set up a national committee with responsibility for formulating policies and countermeasures, and assisting, protecting and rehabilitating victims. The law would allow the use of money and property confiscated as a result of human-trafficking offences to establish a fund for prevention and assistance efforts. The Government was working with the Governments of the Mekong subregion, with which it had signed memorandums of understanding, and with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

11. **Mr. Jang** Hyun-cheol (Republic of Korea) said that the Heads of State gathered for the 2005 World Summit had reaffirmed the importance of women's role in establishing peace and security. The momentum provided by the Summit and by the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women must be exploited to promote the empowerment and advancement of women and the elimination of discrimination and violence against them.

12. On the basis of the Secretary-General's report on violence against women (A/60/211), his delegation hoped that the study to be presented to the General Assembly would contain data, policy recommendations and effective strategies for policy implementation. The Republic of Korea had established legislation and a comprehensive action plan against sexual and domestic violence, and aimed to improve public awareness of the seriousness and illegality of such violence. Legislation against trafficking of women for prostitution had also been put in place.

13. In 2005, the Republic of Korea had abolished the long-established family head system, an emblem of male-dominated society. It was thus in a position to withdraw its reservation to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Women had acquired full equality with men in marital and family affairs, and could pass their surnames to their children. The Ministry of Gender Equality had been expanded and restructured, renamed the Ministry of Gender Equality and the Family, and given responsibility for family policies such as child-rearing and family health in addition to gender issues.

14. **Ms. Adjalova** (Azerbaijan) said that, because gender equality and the empowerment of women directly affected implementation of all aspects of the Millennium Declaration, including development, security and human rights, Azerbaijan had integrated those concerns as a cross-cutting issue into its development policy. It had made women's issues part of its first poverty-reduction strategy and its State programme on poverty reduction and sustainable development for 2006 to 2015. It was conducting a country gender assessment to identify and address key national concerns. Key indicators must be established to monitor the achievement of gender-policy objectives.

15. An important aim of the national development programmes was to establish appropriate sex-disaggregated data to explore the gender dimensions of poverty. Gaps still existed in such areas as the representation of women in political and economic life, violence against women, school attendance and numbers of women refugees and internally displaced persons. In connection with the *2005 Human Development Report*, Azerbaijan had embarked on a survey of gender attitudes to stimulate public debate and trigger policy action to ensure greater gender equality.

16. Physical, sexual and psychological violence against women and girls in the family, in the community and during armed conflict violated and impaired women's human rights. Azerbaijan looked forward to the Secretary-General's in-depth study of the phenomenon as a contribution to combating it. Increasing attention was focused on trafficking in

human beings, especially women and children. Azerbaijan had ratified the relevant international instruments, had adopted legislation and a national action plan, and was building an institutional framework to prevent trafficking, prosecute traffickers and protect and rehabilitate victims.

17. The situation of nearly 1 million people made refugees or internally displaced by the conflict with neighbouring Armenia was a continuing challenge for Azerbaijan. Displacement, poor economic and social conditions and psychological trauma affected women most of all. Azerbaijan welcomed the May 2005 field visit of the Executive Boards of the World Food Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Population Fund, and the United Nations Children's Fund, and called for humanitarian and development programmes to take account of the needs and perspectives of women affected by armed conflict.

18. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) played a key role in promoting gender equality worldwide. Its status, technical leadership, organizational effectiveness and resource base must be improved, so that it could make a greater contribution to the United Nations system. Gender concerns must be addressed in the follow-up to all major United Nations conferences and summits.

19. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that a greater number of women than men continued to suffer the disastrous consequences of poverty and illiteracy. Women were still victims of violence and lacked sexual and reproductive rights. In many countries, women were the first victims of HIV/AIDS. Millions of women continued to die during childbirth, particularly in rural Africa, where there was little access to medical assistance. Adequate access to primary health care must be a priority, and the United Nations must develop and enhance assistance programmes in that area.

20. Poverty reduction and sustainable development were not possible without gender parity. The link between women's advancement and economic growth and development must be taken into account in all socio-economic development strategies. Senegal had recently launched a 10-year national strategy to ensure gender equity, in line with benchmarks established under its poverty-reduction strategy and with the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, Senegal's goal of promoting gender equality in culture, the socio-economic realm, the judiciary and the political arena coincided with the objectives contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Senegal had established institutional mechanisms designed to promote gender equity and the social and economic empowerment of women, while remaining sensitive to cultural mores. His country called on the international community to carry out projects with women in the priority areas of health, nutrition, education and income-producing activities.

21. *Ms. Carvalho* (*Portugal*), *Vice-Chairman took the Chair.*

22. **Ms. Kumela** (Ethiopia) said that women in sub-Saharan Africa still lived under extreme poverty and faced discrimination. Maternal mortality was still excessively high in her part of the world. Access to education was low, in general, but much lower for women. Many discriminatory laws had been repealed and new laws that guaranteed equality had been promulgated, but their implementation and impact on the daily lives of women were still limited. Although various institutions for gender equality had been put in place, the lack of human and financial resources hindered their full operation. In her region, States were far behind in ensuring gender equality, and it was necessary to redouble efforts to include the women of sub-Saharan Africa in the prospering global village.

23. In Ethiopia, the percentage of women parliamentarians had recently grown rapidly, reaching one fifth, and the share of women in government had increased to one in ten, with women taking the position of State Minister in the previously male-dominated Ministries of Justice, as well as Mines and Energy. However, violence against women continued to be a major obstacle to the achievement of gender equality. Traditional harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, abduction and early marriage, characterized the lives of various peoples within Ethiopia. It was necessary to educate and sensitize women in particular, and society in general, about the rights of women. Education for women was vital for gender equality in Ethiopia. Moreover, the advancement of women in Ethiopia was intimately linked to the overall development of the country. Forty per cent of the population, the majority of whom were women, lived on less than one dollar per day. Poverty alleviation was essential to improve the status of women and could be pursued by increasing official development assistance

levels and cancelling debt to heavily indebted poor countries.

24. **Ms. Vikor** (Norway) said that it was time for the United Nations to turn its commitments into action, and her Government called for and supported critical and necessary efforts for gender mainstreaming within the Organization. Stressing that a gender perspective must be integrated into all strategies, programmes and activities designed to reach the Millennium Development Goals, she called on the Secretary-General to develop common indicators to track United Nations country teams' progress. She also requested concrete recommendations on how further to implement and integrate the gender perspective into debates and decision-making within the United Nations. It was crucial for the Organization itself to be a role model in securing balanced and fair representation at all levels. The current under-representation of women, particularly at the senior level, was a cause for concern. The position of Director of UNIFEM needed to be upgraded to the level of Assistant Secretary-General, which would ensure UNIFEM access to all relevant high-level meetings, committees and bodies.

25. Universal access to reproductive health for women and girls around the world was often a matter of life or death. The inclusion of that principle in the outcome of the 2005 World Summit was a major achievement. States must strive to position gender mainstreaming, HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health at the forefront of the development agenda, and should call on the United Nations to develop tangible targets and indicators to improve monitoring.

26. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had requested more annual meeting time to monitor effectively the implementation of the Convention, and her country urged Member States to approve that request. Furthermore, it was critical that States withdrew reservations that were contrary to the purposes of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She called for universal ratification of the Convention, in line with the Secretary-General's appeal to turn the millennium commitments into action. In fact, the only way to achieve the Millennium Development Goals was through women's leadership and female empowerment.

27. **Ms. Tincopa** (Peru) said that since adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Peru had made significant progress in implementing objectives to promote the political, civil, social and economic rights of women, including their reproductive rights. It had reached consensus on policies and standards, created institutions, and seen improvement in social behaviour. There had been significant advances for women in education, health, employment, social and political participation, and in ending violence.

28. A law to foster education for rural children prohibited discrimination against girls for reasons of race, language and origin and had given girls the same access to literacy programmes as boys. Peru was committed to ensuring universal free access to health care, particularly in poverty-stricken areas. HIV/AIDS was a major public-health problem, and her Government had taken steps to reduce the price of medicine for people infected with the disease.

29. Peru had a zero-tolerance policy regarding violence against women, and its current national plan to combat violence against women focused on victims of domestic and sexual violence. Her country had created specific programmes to give women equal access to resources, employment, property, credit, markets and trade. The largest public-investment agency dedicated to poverty eradication in Peru had established a quota for mandatory participation of women in management positions in community projects. Peru had made progress in increasing women's involvement in the socio-political arena through national legislation, parliamentary, regional and municipal elections, and through a new law on political parties that guaranteed women 30 per cent of all political-candidate spots.

30. In poor rural areas of the Andean and Amazon regions, the Government had launched a campaign to provide women and children with identification documents as a first step to the full exercise of their rights. In closing, she emphasized the need to promote and protect the rights of migrants, particularly women and girls.

31. **Ms. Ciroma** (Nigeria) noted the need for concerted effort in getting more women involved in all aspects of human endeavour, in particular in the critical areas of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. As a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All

Forms of Discrimination against Women, Nigeria had taken steps to make it a legally binding instrument. At both federal and state levels, her Government had made concerted efforts to outlaw customary or traditional practices that were not only discriminatory but harmful to the physical and mental health of women and girls. The Government had also been working closely with non-governmental and faith-based organizations, as well as traditional rulers, to change long-held attitudes and perceptions about women and to inculcate in male youth respect for the fundamental rights of women and girls. School curricula and public-awareness campaigns had also focused on those objectives, as well as on the promotion of gender equality in all spheres.

32. At the regional level, Nigeria had ratified the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, which laid down a comprehensive legal framework. The cumulative effect of those initiatives was a significant increase in the literacy rate for women and girls, and in the number of women pursuing careers in male-dominated occupations. The country's national health policies and plans had also become more gender-sensitive and, in the case of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, had taken the special needs of women into consideration. As well, steps had been taken to reduce the rates of maternal mortality and morbidity.

33. Nigeria had made remarkable progress in implementing the Millennium Development Goals as they related to women. An increasing number of women were involved in politics and governance, and in decision-making in public- and private-sector ventures. However, gaps still existed in the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international instruments for the advancement of women. Of particular concern were new, emerging forms of violence against women.

34. Economic empowerment of women, especially those in rural areas, remained a top priority for her Government. Seriously concerned about reports from United Nations agencies warning that extreme poverty, especially among women, had increased in the past 10 years in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria called on its international development partners to complement national efforts at poverty alleviation.

35. **Ms. Intelmann** (Estonia), speaking on agenda item 65, said that women in many parts of the world still lacked the right to vote, participate in politics or express themselves on equal terms with men. Moreover, with social and economic inequality on the rise, certain phenomena — such as sexual exploitation and trafficking in women — had become even more widespread. The main achievement since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women had been a breakthrough in public opinion on gender equality. Both the press and women's organizations had become more interested in the issue and women's understanding had changed, allowing them to make better decisions.

36. Turning to the Conference's impact on Estonia, she said that the most important step had been the adoption in 2004 of the Gender Equality Act, which explicitly prohibited direct and indirect discrimination and obliged authorities and employers to promote gender equality, thus strengthening the legal basis for promoting de jure and de facto gender equality in the country. Another important step had been the introduction in January 2004 of a parental benefit system, the aim of which was to compensate for the loss of income relating to the birth and raising of a child in the first year of its life.

37. Estonian NGOs had been particularly active in promoting gender equality outside Estonia. At the request of the countries concerned and in cooperation with her Government and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, training courses on democracy building, gender equality and gender mainstreaming had been held in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan in the past five years. The Round Table of Estonian Women's Organizations had also concluded a cooperation agreement with the Georgian Coalition of Women's Organizations.

38. The task of combating violence against women was as relevant and urgent today as it had been a decade ago. Violence against women was one of the main obstacles to achieving real equality. Women suffered from violence in private and public life, and women and children were likely to be victims of armed conflict. There was also an urgent need to intensify efforts to combat trafficking in women and girls, which was a particularly cynical form of violence. In that context, her Government strongly supported the

activities of the Nordic-Baltic Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings. The high-level conference entitled "Tackling Human Trafficking: Policy and Best Practice in Europe" which the Task Force, the European Commission and the United Kingdom, which currently held the European Union Presidency, would be hosting later in the month was an important step towards developing the most suitable policy and best practices against human trafficking in Europe.

39. Universal initiatives could be more effective if advanced at the regional level. Cooperation on combating violence against women in the Nordic-Baltic region had been intensive and fruitful, spawning numerous projects on various topics. Estonia had also hosted the third Baltic Sea Women's Conference "Women and Democracy". Awareness-raising campaigns, training courses for civil servants, and conferences and seminars for politicians, researchers and NGOs had also been organized in the region.

40. **Mr. Sin** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation wished to draw attention to the issue of "comfort women", which needed to be resolved as early as possible. Two years earlier, an 82-year-old former "comfort woman" for the Japanese Army, no longer able to tolerate Japan describing such women as "prostitutes" and all their cases as "falsehood", had decided to speak out and travel abroad to identify the former camps where she had been forced to serve. Her call that history must not be erased reflected the outcries of the 200,000 women who had served as "comfort women" for the Japanese Army and was an appeal to the world conscience that such crimes must not be repeated.

41. There was no precedence in the history of war whereby a Government had organized the forcible draft, abduction and kidnapping of women from other countries, dragged them into battlefields and imposed on them collective sexual slavery to satisfy the lust of their soldiers. For that reason, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women had defined it as the crime of "military sexual slavery" and recommended that the Japanese Government should admit its legal responsibility, immediately apologize and officially compensate the victims, reflect the reality of history in educational curricula and punish criminals. However, despite the strong denunciation by Asian countries, the Japanese authorities denied the very existence of "comfort women", had deleted all references to them from their history books and openly visited the Yasukuni shrine where the criminals who had set up the system of "comfort women" were buried.

42. Today, Japan's distortion of history went so far as to openly justify, praise and fabricate history, beautifying its war against Asian countries as a "liberation war", war criminals as patriots and its colonial rule as a "contribution to development and civilization", and shamelessly arguing that it was not legally responsible for the "comfort women" issue. In addition, it was making territorial claims to sacred land belonging to its neighbours.

43. History was objective. It could not be changed by distortion or made to vanish by cover-up. Moreover, any country distorting history could not have a bright future, but would repeat the same mistakes. Given that such a dangerous country was geographically close to Korea, his Government could not just overlook Japan's manoeuvres for militarization. It was a mockery of humankind that Japan was attempting to occupy a permanent seat on the Security Council, given that it was a war criminal that had massacred millions of Asian people and was the only defeated country that had not faced up to its war crimes. If Japan really wanted to play a politico-military role commensurate with its economic power, it should compensate for the crimes that it had committed in the past.

44. **Mr. Buffa** (Paraguay) said that, in addition to celebrating progress made, it was important to recognize that many challenges still needed to be overcome before women would be able to enjoy equal opportunities and freely exercise their rights. For that reason, all the stakeholders and sectors concerned needed to step up their coordination and commitment, particularly in such areas as girls' school-enrolment rate, women's access to sexual and reproductive health, women's property and inheritance rights, discrimination in the workplace, the proportion of women in local government and national parliaments, and combating violence against women and girls.

45. Earlier in 2005, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had examined the third, fourth and fifth periodic reports of Paraguay, a process in which, despite budgetary difficulties, the Government had participated, reflecting the importance it attached to the advancement of women and to the Convention. In line with its commitment to implementing that instrument,

the national machinery for women had transmitted the Committee's final observations to State institutions, NGOs and parliamentary commissions. Paraguay had also set up an inter-institutional bureau to coordinate implementation of the Convention, which had begun by analysing the Committee's observations and identifying areas for action.

46. In order for women to participate on an equal footing with men, they must have access to education and health. For that reason, the national programme for equality of women in education had included the gender component in all levels of education, including the curriculum, educational materials and teacher training-programmes. The gap between women and men in terms of access to education and number of years of study was closing all the time. As part of the current national sexual and reproductive health plan, meanwhile, the Government had launched a "safe childbirth" programme that provided free care to pregnant women in public-health centres and hospitals throughout the country. It was also important to mention the feminization of HIV/AIDS. Inequalities in terms of access to information, education and health and women's economic dependency on men limited their ability to protect themselves from infection, which was often a result of the behaviour of their partner. It was therefore essential to mobilize women and men to confront the social norms that aggravated women's vulnerability.

47. There was no single, global solution to violence against women; multisectoral strategies were needed. Moreover, as pointed out in the Secretary-General's report (A/60/211, para. 13), the limitations or lack of data on the nature, prevalence and incidence of violence against women was a significant constraint to effective policymaking. At the national level, there was a need to create a single system for registering victims of violence. In recent years, justices of the peace had been responsible for receiving reports of violence and taking measures to protect the rights of victims and their families. Health centres and the police were also being trained in dealing with cases and referring them to the corresponding bodies. His delegation welcomed the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on violence against women migrant workers (A/60/137 and Corr.1), in particular the need to further explore the links between migration and trafficking and to address the two issues accordingly, with a particular focus on protecting women from all forms of violence (para. 76). Lastly, his delegation wished to reiterate its support for the revitalization of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).

48. *Mr. Butagira (Uganda) resumed the Chair.*

49. **Ms. Seanedzu** (Ghana) said that Ghana had taken serious measures to improve the status of women and had raised awareness of gender issues and women's participation in national development. The new Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs reflected her Government's political will to give the highest consideration to gender disparity and create an enabling environment for the advancement of women. Women continued to play pivotal roles in their families and, even in households with male heads, often contributed significantly to household needs. The perception of gender roles in Ghanaian society was gradually changing; women's domains had expanded considerably into formal-sector professions and their public roles in political and civil organizations had increased. As education levels improved, parents had also become more receptive to the idea of education and professional training for girls. Progress had been achieved through greater resource allocation by the Government and donor agencies for training, technology transfer, credit support and health programmes that benefited women. To promote gender perspectives in legislation, the basic guarantees of equality were enshrined in the 1992 Constitution, which accorded specific articles to women's rights. The national machinery had been working with legislative bodies to review those aspects of Ghanaian legislation which hindered women's advancement.

50. For example, a domestic-violence bill was under active consideration for passage into law, a women and juvenile unit under the police service was helping to break the silence surrounding domestic violence, and law-enforcement agencies and judges were being trained on eliminating violence against women. Moreover, some harmful practices such as widowhood rights and female genital mutilation had been criminalized under the criminal code, while a parliamentary committee on gender had been established and a national gender policy developed. The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice was also mandated to ensure that girls' and women's human rights were not infringed upon, and the national machinery was working with the Ghana Labour Advisory Board to ensure that certain portions

of the new Labour Act were amended in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

51. In a bid to strengthen women's economic security, access to credit had improved with the introduction of the Government's microfinance schemes for women entrepreneurs. In addition, the national machinery had worked to incorporate gender concerns into Ghana's information and communication technology policy for integrated development, and had developed an assessment and planning tool for women's health and development for the United Nations *Human Development Report*. A wide range of NGOs and professional bodies had also adopted a gender and development approach in their work. Women were being urged to take high positions in organizations, while their political awareness had been intensified. At the subregional level, the national machinery had also revived inter-agency dialogue by maintaining regular interaction and communication on gender issues with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

52. In many developing countries, women were still a long way from achieving equal opportunities and traditional biases, poverty, cultural perceptions, social attitudes and women's health needs continued to limit their access to basic rights. The situation had been further compounded by globalization, which had intensified the inequalities confronting many women and hampered their opportunities. Ghana was convinced that the international community should pursue gender mainstreaming aggressively at all levels of society. The road map was within arm's reach. The onus was on the international community to uphold the objectives laid down in the Beijing Platform for Action and its review processes and formulate strategies to realize those ideals.

53. **Mr. Pham Hai Anh** (Viet Nam) said that, even though progress had been made, women were still victims of marginalization, discrimination and acts of violence. The potential of women as equal partners in joint efforts for peace and development needed to be recognized and used to the fullest, and efforts should be stepped up at all levels to promote gender equality and the advancement of women, and to eliminate discrimination and violence against women.

54. Viet Nam's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its commitments under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration were mutually reinforcing and were being comprehensively implemented. Laws and regulations had been amended to incorporate a gender perspective; they included the law on land ownership, the law on marriage and the family, labour law and the law on the land-use transfer tax. The national strategy for the advancement of women had set targets in the areas of employment, education, health care, decision-making and capacity-building. To attain those targets, the Prime Minister had required all sectors and government agencies to implement the recommended measures and to employ gender mainstreaming in formulating and implementing national policies.

55. In Viet Nam, education was considered the foundation for the economic empowerment of women. Among the younger population, the proportion of literate women was almost equal to that of men. The same applied to student enrolment in high schools and universities. Special programmes in such areas as literacy and on-the-job training had also been established to benefit women.

56. The national strategy for the advancement of women aimed to raise women's share of the workforce and of newly created jobs each year to 50 per cent. Working women received special care during maternity and in retirement, and Viet Nam was one of the countries that allowed a longer period of maternity leave than the minimum stipulated by ILO. Improvements to the health-care system had greatly reduced the maternal mortality rate by increasing the number of deliveries attended by skilled medical staff, providing more prenatal care and vaccinating more women for tetanus.

57. Women's access to land and credit was equally important to their economic empowerment. To that end, legislation had been amended to require the names of both wife and husband to be shown on land-use certificates and joint-property certificates, thereby facilitating women's access to credit. As well, new credit policies greatly increased the number of loans to women, especially in rural areas. A plan of action had been established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, aimed at achieving social and economic equality of women and men through gender mainstreaming in all the Ministry's policies, programmes and plans.

58. As to the role of Vietnamese women in political life, the proportion of women representatives in the National Assembly had risen steadily to over one quarter. The proportion of women elected to local people's councils at all levels had also increased slightly. Women accounted for over one in ten ministers, as well as a number of other important posts, including the Vice-President who had just attended the 2005 World Summit.

59. Viet Nam's achievements were due to great efforts both by the Government, notably the National Committee for the Advancement of Women, and by women's organizations such as the Viet Nam Women's Union.

60. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) said that, since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Morocco had been working on broad reforms aimed at strengthening women's independence, improving the status of women and eliminating discrimination. Women's affairs now fell under the new Department for Families, Children and Disabled Persons, and a number of focal points had been named in different departments across Morocco responsible for ensuring equality between men and women. As a result, women were playing a larger role in public affairs and decision-making at all levels and in all branches of government. In the 2002 elections, 35 women had been elected to Parliament, and there were two women ministers in the present Government. In January 2004, taking into account the King's expressed will that women should be integrated into modern life, Parliament had unanimously adopted the new Family Code laying down the principle of equality between men and women, with the aim of strengthening families, better guaranteeing women's equality, equity and fundamental rights, and preserving the higher interests of children while safeguarding human dignity. Under the Code, the Government had established family courts and instituted training programmes for officials.

61. In July 2005, the King had announced his decision to grant children the right to Moroccan nationality on the basis of their mother's nationality. Moreover, government proposals for legislative reform would strengthen provisions concerning violence against women. The new Labour Code would protect women against all physical and moral abuse, and the Penal Code would criminalize domestic violence, sexual harassment and any other kind of violence against women.

62. The status of women in Morocco had improved significantly since the 1990s, and the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had made it possible to institute legislative reforms and integrate a gender approach in all development policies. Those actions represented solid progress along the path of establishing equality, and reflected the Government's political will to establish a democratic, modern State governed by the rule of law, and to promote a culture of human rights in which the rights of women were a key component.

63. **Mr. Krishnamoorthy** (Sri Lanka) said that his country attached great importance to achieving equal access for women at all of decision-making levels and ensuring the full participation of women in the workforce in its efforts to eradicate poverty.

64. The Beijing Platform for Action continued to be the yardstick by which Sri Lanka measured gender balance and equality, and the country had strengthened its programmes in support of gender equality and women's development. The advancement of women should be considered not in isolation but in terms of the status of women in all aspects of life. Promoting gender equality and empowering women were an effective means of combating poverty, hunger and disease, and, in that context, all eight Millennium Development Goals were closely linked to women.

65. The development and welfare policies pursued by Sri Lanka since independence had ensured the country a high ranking in the United Nations Human Development Index. The country's female literacy rate was 97 per cent. University enrolment was high, with comparatively high rates of employment at executive levels. The high literacy rate had resulted in high standards of maternal and childcare. In the rural sector, community-based initiatives bore testimony to the visible empowerment of women. Sri Lanka had achieved zero gender disparity in implementing the Millennium Development Goals, and remained committed to fully implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

66. Increasing female participation in the workforce would not only strengthen the country's potential for growth but also reduce the number of poor as

households gained a second income. Men and women had to acknowledge each other's contribution in shouldering family responsibilities, and to improve their quality of life by properly balancing work and family. As the country modernized and its economy became increasingly internationalized, it was imperative that women should undertake remunerated work under equal conditions. Sri Lanka's concern was how to ensure that that was done fairly and harmoniously, to improve the quality of life for all.

67. **Mr. Takase** (Japan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply and referring to the statement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, said that, in regard to the issues of the past, the Prime Minister of Japan, Junichiro Koizumi, had on 15 August 2005 again elaborated the thinking of the Government of Japan on the matter. He wished to remind the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that, in the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks issued on 19 September 2005, both Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had committed themselves to taking steps to normalize their relations in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration. Prior to the Joint Statement, Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had held a number of bilateral discussions to reach that common understanding. Japan requested that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should also take sincere steps to address outstanding issues in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration.

68. He further wished to point out that the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had referred to some unsubstantiated numbers in an attempt to make a case, but that that could not be an excuse for the failure of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take sincere steps to address outstanding issues, in particular the abduction of Japanese nationals by agents of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

69. On the matter of the qualifications of a country for permanent membership of the Security Council, Japan firmly believed that such qualifications should be judged by that country's real contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security.

70. **Mr. Pak** Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was regrettable that Japan could not express its willingness to redress past crimes, and showed no political willingness on the issue. As for the so-called outstanding issues of the Pyongyang Declaration, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had done its best in regard to them and had informed Japan of the steps it had taken.

71. **Mr. Takase** (Japan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, quoted from the statement made on 15 August 2005 by the Prime Minister of Japan, to which he had previously made reference: "In the past, Japan, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly those of Asian nations. Sincerely facing these facts of history, I once again express my feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology, and also express the feelings of mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, in the war. I am determined not to allow the lessons of that horrible war to erode, and to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the world without ever again waging a war." He called once again on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take steps with respect to the outstanding items of the Pyongyang Declaration.

72. **Mr. Pak** Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea wanted not words, but actions. It had often heard pledges, but wanted a sincere apology and practical redress.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.